

## **Chesapeake Bay Exception CBE-11-078: Oktoberfest Attraction Expansion, Busch Gardens Williamsburg**

Staff report for the March 9, 2011 Chesapeake Bay Board Public Hearing

This staff report is prepared by the James City County Environmental Division to provide information to the Chesapeake Bay Board to assist them in making a recommendation on this assessment. It may be useful to members of the general public interested in this assessment.

### **Existing Site Data & Information**

Applicant: Mr. Ronnie Orsborne; Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Land Owner(s): SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment  
Attn: Mr. Larry Giles

Location: 7851 Pocahontas Trail.  
Williamsburg, VA 23185  
Pin: 5140100009

Parcel Size/Zoning: 328 acres, M-1 Limited Business/Industrial

Percent of Parcel in RPA: 39% (130 +/- acres)

Watershed: James River (HUC Code JL 35)

### **Proposed Impacts**

Disturbed Area: 9,040 square feet total RPA encroachment

RPA Encroachment: Landward (4,840 sf) and Seaward (4,200 sf) 50 foot RPA Buffers

### **Brief Summary and Description of Activities**

Mr. Ronnie Orsborne of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. on behalf of Mr. Larry Giles of SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment (Busch Gardens) has applied for an exception to the Chesapeake Bay Ordinance for the encroachment into the RPA buffer for a replacement ride for the former Big Bad Wolf coaster. The site plan is under concurrent review by the County under plan number SP-0014-2011.

The new ride will utilize a major portion of the footprint of the Big Bad Wolf, which was originally constructed in the mid 1980's adjacent to the Rhine River prior to the adoption of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance. Where possible, the foundations from the Big Bad Wolf will be re-used for the new ride. For the purposes of this report, Busch Gardens has elected to assume all new foundations within the RPA buffer as a worst-case scenario when calculating impervious cover within the RPA. The applicant has proposed that the elevated track portion of the ride not count as impervious cover for purposes of this report, only the support foundations. Staff concurs with this.

Busch Gardens is proposing the following as mitigation for the new ride RPA impacts: removal of 2,290 sf of impervious cover and replanting of 3,725 sf, a 1:1 ratio.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff has fully reviewed the application and exception request, and has determined impacts associated with the proposal to be moderate for the proposed construction and that the proposed mitigation measures offset the impacts to the RPA. Staff recommends the Chesapeake Bay Board approve this Chesapeake Bay Exception with the following conditions:

1. The applicant must obtain all other necessary local permits as required for the project.
2. All proposed mitigation plantings shall meet James City County Standards with all proposed trees being a minimum of 1 ½ inch caliper and shrubs being a minimum of three gallon size.
3. A pre-construction meeting shall be held on-site prior to commencing work.
4. Full implementation of the RPA Mitigation Plan submitted with the WQIA (Table 3, page 4) and any additional Board mitigation requirements shall be guaranteed through the provisions of the Ordinance contained in Sections 23-10(3) d. and 23-17(c) by providing a form of surety satisfactory to the County Attorney.
5. This exception request approval shall become null and void if construction has not begun by March 9, 2012 or all improvements including the required mitigation plantings are not completed by that expiration date.
6. Written requests for an extension to an exception shall be submitted to the Environmental Division no later than 2 weeks prior to the expiration date.

### **Background**

The park was originally built prior to the adoption of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance. The Big Bad Wolf coaster was decommissioned in 2009. The new ride will use the Big Bad Wolf footprint to the greatest extent practicable. However, some deviations will be necessary for track alignment variations to provide for the safe entry and exit from the new event building. Total construction encroachment into the RPA will be 9,040 sf.

There is 9,040 sf of encroachment in to the RPA; 3,725 sf is permanent vegetation clearing for the ride; 2,111 sf is temporary construction to remain as grass pavers for future maintenance access; and 832 sf of new impervious cover. The remaining area (3,204 sf) is current RPA from the Big Bad Wolf ride and proposed to remain. The existing impervious cover in the RPA is 2,290 sf. Included within the encroachment totals is temporary erosion and sediment control features that will be removed and the area stabilized once construction is completed.

Proposed mitigation for the new ride is as follows: a net reduction in the impervious cover (2,290 existing to be removed plus 832 sf to be added) of -1,458 sf and restoration of RPA area previously impacted from the Big Bad Wolf at a 1:1 ratio of 3,725 sf for the new vegetation clearing. In addition, Busch Gardens is proposing to revegetate an additional 18,191 sf of previously impacted RPA from the Big Bad Wolf to offset future mitigation requirements.

There is an area of wetland impact proposed for this project for the construction of a sediment forebay within the Rhine River, which will provide pre-treatment of stormwater generated from this project before it reaches the Rhine River (on-site BMP). The existing RPA area near the new ride is approximately 44% cleared and the new ride will clear approximately 4% more. Busch Gardens is proposing to restore 21,916 sf of RPA with woody vegetation, to bring the cleared RPA near the new ride to approximately 25%, for a net gain of vegetated RPA.

This exception request is for a replacement ride which will encroach into both the landward and seaward RPA buffers and is not considered water dependent. Therefore in accordance with section 23-14 of the Ordinance, an exception must be processed by the Chesapeake Bay Board after a public hearing.

### **Staff Evaluation**

Staff has evaluated the application and exception request for all work as described above. The proposal is for a new amusement park ride in the area of the former Big Bad Wolf coaster. Staff finds that the application has met the conditions in the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, Sections 23-11 and 23-14, and that the application should be heard by the Board.

### **Water Quality Impact Assessment (WQIA)**

In accordance with Bay Act requirements and the Ordinance all land disturbance, development or redevelopment within the RPA requires a water quality impact assessment (WQIA). Water quality impact assessments shall identify impacts of proposed development on water quality and land in RPAs and recommended measures for mitigation of these impacts. Localities must review a WQIA prior to action on the exception request.

A WQIA was provided on February 9, 2011. Based on staff review, the WQIA proposes to mitigate for RPA impacts by:

- Removing 2,290 sf impervious cover; and
- Re-planting 3,725 sf of the RPA as compensation for vegetation clearing for this project; and
- The placement of EC-3 matting on disturbed slopes equal to or greater than 3:1; and
- A sediment forebay at the exit of the stormwater conveyance system, prior to stormwater entering the Rhine River, which is the stormwater BMP for Busch Gardens Williamsburg.

### **Consideration by the Chesapeake Bay Board**

The exception granting body is permitted to require reasonable and appropriate conditions in granting the exception request in accordance with Section 23-14 of the County's Chesapeake Bay Preservation ordinance. The Chesapeake Bay Board is to fully consider Chesapeake Bay Exception CBE-11-078 as outlined and presented above and review the request for exception and the water quality impact assessment. The Board may grant the exception with such conditions and safeguards as deemed necessary to further the purpose and intent of the County's Chapter 23 Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance. Resolutions for granting approval or granting denial of Chesapeake Bay Exception CBE-11-078 are included for the Board's use and decision.

Staff Report prepared by:

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Michael D. Woolson  
Senior Watershed Planner

CONCUR:

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Scott J. Thomas  
Secretary to the Board

Attachments: WQIA  
Selected siteplan submittal sheets